

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5307

As Passed Senate, March 15, 1999

Title: An act relating to the reclamation of surface disturbances caused by underground mining.

Brief Description: Concerning reclamation of underground mine tailings.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Swecker, Fraser and Kline; by request of Commissioner of Public Lands.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation: 2/17/99, 3/1/99 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/15/99, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, PARKS & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Hargrove, Oke, Rossi, Snyder, Spanel and Stevens.

Staff: Victor Moon (786-7469)

Background: The Department of Natural Resources employs geologists as part of the department's enforcement of reclamation laws for surface mining in Washington. Most of the mines in the state are open pit sand and gravel operations, and there are a few metal mines which are also regulated by the Department of Natural Resources.

In addition, there are a few underground metal mines, and in this case, the Department of Ecology regulates the reclamation of those sites. Since there are very few sites, the Department of Ecology uses the expertise of the Department of Natural Resources when preparing reclamation plans for the surface activities of these underground mines.

Summary of Bill: The surface mining definition of disturbed area— is expanded to include aboveground waste rock sites and tailings for underground mines.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Department of Natural Resources currently does most of the surface reclamation, planning, and enforcement at the request of the Department of Ecology. Doing it directly is more efficient and would save money.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Amy Bell, DNR; John Woodring, Northwest Mining Association; Les Kinney, Okanogan County Cattlemen's Association.

House Amendment(s): Ongoing projects involving reclamation are grandfathered in under the present program in the Department of Ecology.